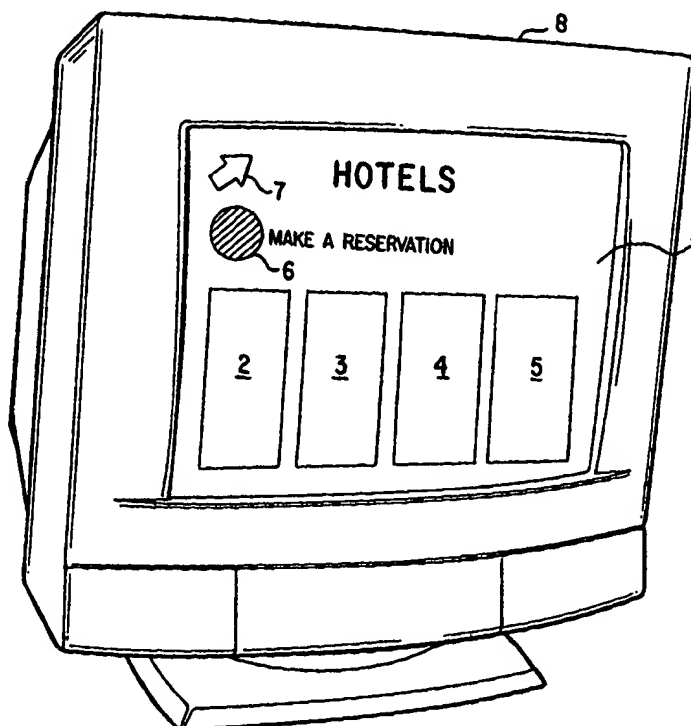


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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR STIMULATING ELECTRONIC PURCHASES ON A WEB SITE**(57) Abstract**

A method and device for stimulating or encouraging a potential customer viewing a merchant's web site (1) on the Internet to purchase goods or services from the web site (1). The method and device include the formation of a link (6) on a web page (6). The link (6) is formed in a predetermined shape and color, each of which have been identified as creating a psychological effect in an individual that will stimulate the individual to proceed with or complete a contemplated purchase.



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**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR STIMULATING
ELECTRONIC PURCHASES ON A WEB SITE**

5

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method and apparatus for stimulating or encouraging a potential customer viewing a web site on the Internet to purchase goods or services on the web site. More particularly, the invention relates to the formation of a link on a web page. The link is formed in a predetermined shape and color, each of which has been identified as creating a psychological effect in an individual that will stimulate the individual to proceed or with or enact a contemplated purchase.

The Internet is a network which provides avenues for worldwide communication of information, ideas and messages. Although the Internet has been utilized by academia for decades, recently there has been almost an explosion of interest in the Internet and the information residing thereon.

A form of interface for navigating the Internet, known as the World-Wide Web (Web or WWW) has revolutionized the way the information is managed and distributed through the Internet. The Web accounts for a significant part of the growth in the popularity of the Internet, perhaps because of the user-friendly graphical user interfaces ("GUIs") or browsers that are readily available for accessing the Web. The information servers which provide formatted documents defined by the WWW are called the web sites. The electronic documents provided by the web sites are commonly referred to as web pages or files. A client software which navigates through the Internet sites and displays Web pages is referred to as the Web "browser." A browser allows access not

only to Web pages, but all the other existing information resources on the Internet.

The architecture of the Web follows a conventional client-server model. The terms "client" and "server" are used to refer to a computer's general role as a requester of data (the client) or provider of data (the server). Under the Web environment, Web browsers reside in clients and Web documents reside in servers. Web clients and Web servers communicate using a protocol called "HyperText Transfer Protocol" (HTTP). A browser opens a connection to a server and initiates a request for a document. The server delivers the requested document, typically in the form of a text document coded in a standard Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) format, and when the connection is closed in the above interaction, the server serves a passive role, i.e., it accepts commands from the client and cannot request the client to perform any action.

There are, however, several problems with conducting commerce over a public network such as the Internet. One problem is the lack of a secure means for transferring information and money. When making a purchase, a customer generally must transmit his credit card number and other confidential information electronically to the merchant. Such information is at risk of interception by third parties or misuse by employees of the merchant. Although some Web browsers permit data encryption, the effectiveness of such encryption generally is limited.

Another problem with commerce over the Internet is that the customer generally must type in and transmit a plethora of information, including confidential financial information, each

time the customer wishes to purchase something from a merchant. The type and form of such information varies from merchant to merchant, and each merchant typically has a customized electronic order form. This is a hassle for the customer. It also requires
5 confidential information to be placed at risk each time such information is transmitted to a new merchant. All of these problems tend to leave the customer feeling frustrated, which in turn, leads to lost sales.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an improved method and apparatus for stimulating and encouraging a potential customer into purchasing goods or services being viewed on a web page. A further object is to
15 overcome the heretofore noted disadvantages by providing a method to allow a potential customer to easily and quickly access that portion of a merchant's web site that is required to make a purchase.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an
20 easy to operate access device for a user to enter a secure transmission line for sending sensitive data that a potential customer may be required to submit during a purchase transaction.

These and other objectives are obtained by the present invention which contemplates a method for promoting purchases
25 from an Internet web site. The methods includes the step of advertising product or service information on at least one merchant web page accessible to a potential customer through a web browser over a network line. The method includes the further step of overlaying on the web page, a button icon which is

adapted to be activated by the customer when the customer desires to purchase a product or service. Preferably, the button icon is in a predetermined color and shape that encourages the customer to purchase the product or service advertised on the web page. The method includes a further step of directing the customer to an order area on the web page or on a different web page after activation of the button icon. This allows the customer to purchase the goods or services quickly and easily.

In another embodiment of the present invention, an icon is implanted or overlayed on a page viewable by a customer on a computer monitor. The icon is adapted to allow the customer to purchase goods and services advertised on the web page. The icon is in the shape of a button and is provided on the web page at a predetermined location. The icon is activated by the customer through a computer peripheral device, such as a mouse, touch screen or other such device. The icon is in a predetermined shape and color so as to stimulate the customer into purchasing the merchant's goods and services.

Preferably, the button icon is substantially circular in shape and is green in color. In one embodiment contemplated by the invention, the button icon carries a white cross indicating that the transmission will be secure. The button icon may be implanted or overlayed on the web page at a single location, or at a plurality of locations. When activated, the button icon will send the customer via a link to a separate page or window where an order form will be provided on which the customer indicates or confirms the product or service to be ordered. Alternatively, activation of the button icon may send the customer to a chat page or open a chat window where the customer

may interact in real time with a representative of the merchant.

Other objects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of the invention when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematic of a web page according to one embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 2A-2C is a schematic of a web page according to a second and third embodiment of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figure 1 illustrates a typical web page 1 accessible through the Internet. The merchant will place various advertisements for goods and services as well as other information concerning its business in text areas 2-5. In addition, the web page may have other links (not shown) which when activated by the customer, will jump the customer to different web pages.

A potential customer, using a computer system including a monitor and other peripheral devices, gains access to web page 1 (called a "Home Page") on a web site through an Internet Web browser. Such web browsers are, for example, Yahoo.com, AOL.com, Infoseek.com, etc. Once connected to the web site, the potential customer will have access to various pages on the site. By placing a mouse cursor 7 on one of the text areas 2-5 and clicking, a new web page or site will open.

In order to encourage a potential customer to purchase goods and/or services on the web page, a button icon 6 is provided on

the web page. Icon 6 is viewable by a customer on a computer monitor 8. Icon 6 is preferably in the shape of a substantially circular button. Most preferably, the icon is green in color. The circular shape and green color are chosen because this combination of shape and color has been determined to provide the most stimulus in individuals to proceed with a transaction. The circular green button is believed to stimulate impulses in the customer's brain, producing a psychological effect to proceed with a contemplated transaction.

Preferably, icon 6 is provided on the web page at a predetermined location. This location may be anywhere on the page. Most preferably, icon 6 is located near a text area advertising a product or service that the merchant is most interested in selling. Icon 6 may appear on web page 1 when the web page is initially opened by the customer. Alternatively, icon 6 may appear on an opened web page after a predetermined amount of time has elapsed or when mouse cursor 7 is moved to a specific area on the page.

Icon 6 is activated by the customer through a computer peripheral device, such as a mouse, touch screen or the like, which are not shown. The customer maneuvers mouse cursor 7 over icon 6 and operates the peripheral device, thereby jumping to an order page or opening an order window on the merchant's web site. The combination of the shape and color of icon 6 together with the simplicity of jumping to an order site further encourages the customer to complete a contemplated purchase.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, icon 6 may appear as a single button on web page 1. Alternatively, as shown in Figs. 2A-2C, web page 1 may have several icons 6 located on the page. This

embodiment permits easier access to a wider variety of goods and services.

Fig. 2B also shows another embodiment of the icon 9. In this embodiment, icon 9 is provided with a cross. Preferably the cross is white. Icon 9 signifies to the customer that communication with the merchant will be secure when using icon 9. This puts the potential customer at ease concerning the transfer of sensitive information over the Internet and further encourages a potential sale.

In another embodiment according to the invention as shown in Fig. 2C, icon 10 is adapted to transfer the customer to a chat area. In this case, the customer may carry on a real-time discussion with a representative of the merchant. This allows the customer to obtain additional information on the goods and services to be purchased as well as being able to place an order directly with the representative. The discussion may be over the Internet line in type-written form, or through a voice operated system (not shown).

The present invention is also directed to a method for promoting sales of goods and services advertised on a merchant's web page. According to the invention, this method includes the step of advertising product or service information on at least one merchant web page accessible to a potential customer through a web browser over a network line. The potential customer may access the web page through a computer terminal having an appropriate modem hook-up.

In order to stimulate a purchase, the method also includes the step of overlaying a button icon on the web page. As noted above, in order to avoid the complexities generally associated

with accessing various pages on a web site, the button icon is adapted to be activated by the customer when the customer desires to purchase a product or service. To further encourage a purchase, the button icon is a predetermined color and shape.

5 Preferably the icon is colored green. More preferably, the button icon is formed in a substantially circular shape. The method includes a further step of directing the customer to an order area on the web page or on a different web page after activation of the button icon thereby allowing the customer to
10 purchase the goods or services in a reasonably quick and uncomplicated manner.

The method of the present invention may also include a further step of overlaying the button icon on the web page at a single location. Alternatively, the step may include overlaying
15 the button icon on the web page at a plurality of locations. This step provides the customer with greater access to the merchant's goods and services.

In a further step according to this aspect of the invention, the icon is provided with a cross. Preferably, the cross is
20 white. The cross informs the customer that communication with the merchant using the icon will be secure. This puts the potential customer at ease concerning the transfer of sensitive information over the Internet and further encourages a potential sale. In a further step of the inventive method, use of the icon
25 will transfer the customer to a chat area. In this case, the customer may carry on a real-time discussion with a representative of the merchant. This allows the customer to obtain additional information on the goods and services to be purchased as well as being able to place an order directly with

the representative. The discussion may be over the Internet line in type-written form, or through a voice operated system.

A further step of the method according to the present invention, includes overlaying the button icon on the web page automatically after the customer has moved the cursor to a specific item or service. This allows the customer to view a web page with being pressured immediately to purchase.

In all of the above-described embodiments, the customer is persuaded by subliminal stimulus in the form of a circular green button to complete a sale. The combination of color, shape and location all provide encouragement to the potential customer to complete a transaction.

The foregoing disclosure has been set forth merely to illustrate the invention and is not intended to be limiting. Since modifications of the disclosed embodiments incorporating the spirit and substance of the invention may occur to persons skilled in the art, the invention should be construed to include everything within the scope of the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1. A method for promoting purchases from an Internet web site comprising the steps of:

5 overlaying a button icon on a web page accessible to a potential customer through a web browser over a network line, said button icon adapted to be activated by the customer when the customer desires to purchase a product or service; the button icon being of a predetermined color and shape so as to encourage
10 the customer to purchase a product or service advertised on the web page; and

 prompting the appearance of an order window on the web page or opening a different web page after activation of the button icon thereby allowing the customer to purchase the goods
15 or services.

2. A method according to claim 1 comprising the further step of coloring the button icon green.

20 3. A method according to claim 2 comprising the further step of designing the button icon to be substantially circular.

 4. A method according to claim 3 comprising the further step providing a cross on the button icon.

25 5. A method according to claim 1 comprising the further step of overlaying the button icon on the web page at a single location.

6. A method according to claim 1 comprising the further step of overlaying the button icon on the web page at a plurality of locations.

5 7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of prompting the appearance of an order window on the web page or opening a different web page comprises the further step of providing a form on which the customer indicates the product or service to be ordered.

10 8. A method according to claim 1 comprising a further step of prompting the appearance of a chat area whereby the customer may obtain information and place an order for goods or services through an interaction with a merchant representative.

15 9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the step of directing the customer to a chat area will automatically occur after the customer has viewed said web page for a predetermined period of time.

20 10. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of overlaying the button icon on the web page will automatically occur after the customer has moved the cursor to an item or service on said web page.

25 11. An icon on a web page viewable by a customer on a computer monitor, the icon being adapted to allow the customer to purchase goods and services advertised on the web page, the icon being in the shape of a button and being provided on the web

page at a predetermined location and is activatable by the customer through a computer peripheral device, wherein the icon is in a predetermined shape and color so as to stimulate the customer into purchasing the goods and services.

5

12. An icon according to claim 11 wherein the color of the icon is green.

10

13. An icon according to claim 12 wherein the icon is substantially circular.

14. An icon according to claim 13 wherein a cross is provided on the icon.

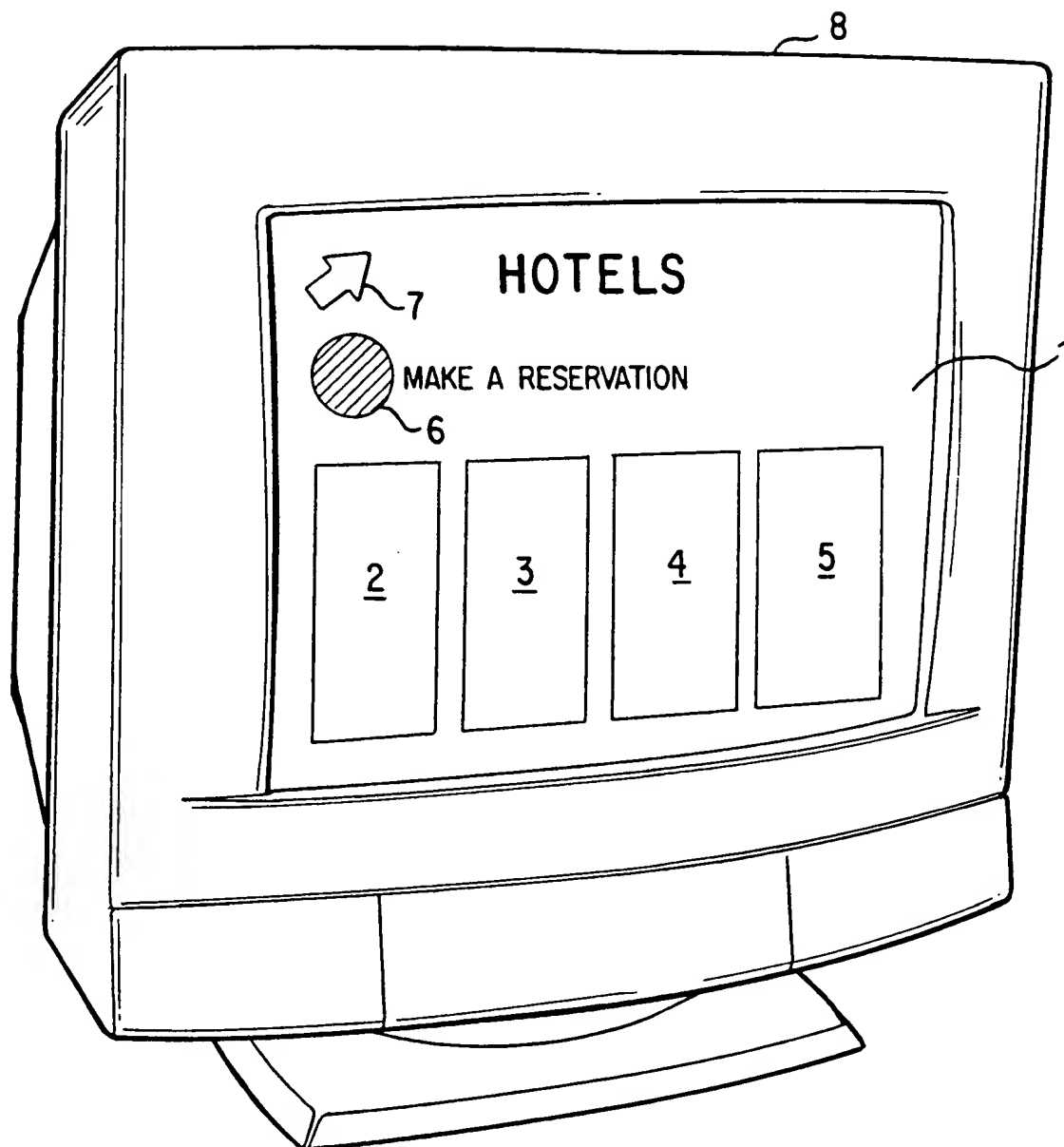
15

15. An icon according to claim 11 wherein the icon is overlaid on the web page at a single location.

16. An icon according to claim 11 wherein the icon is overlaid on the web page at a plurality of locations.

20

17. An icon according to claim 11 wherein the icon is overlaid on the web page automatically after the customer has moved the cursor to a specific product or service on the web page.



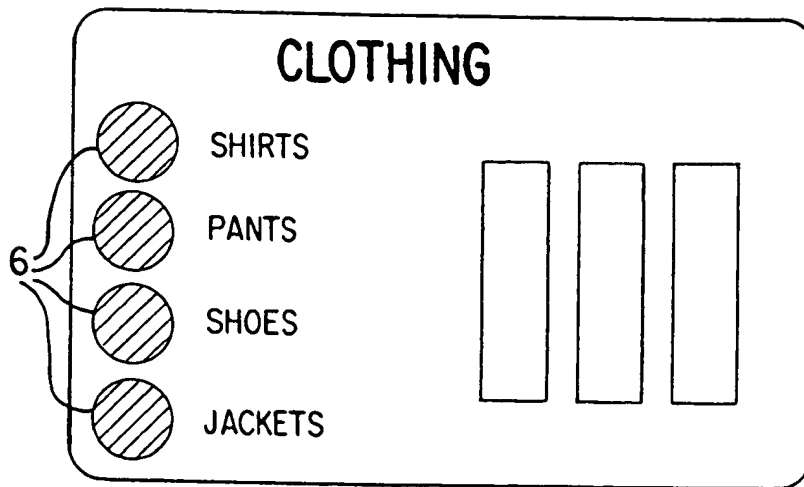


FIG. 2A

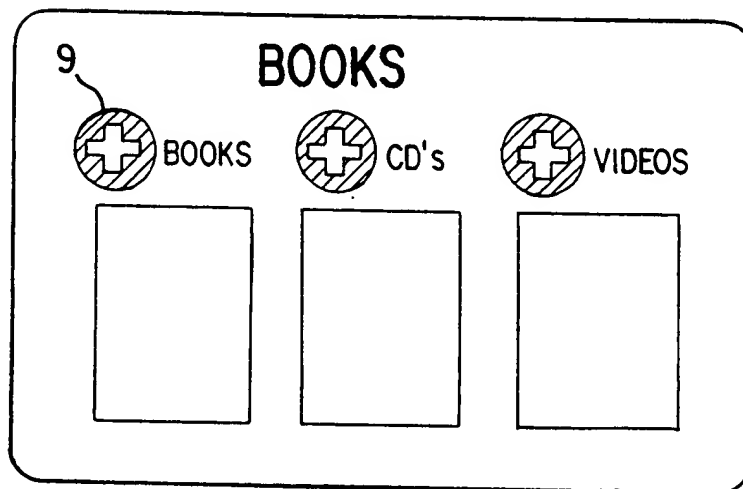


FIG. 2B

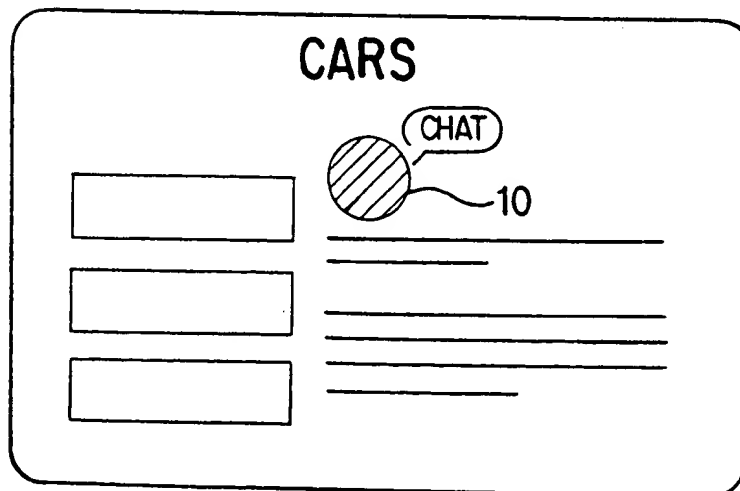


FIG. 2C